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only subsequent Latin writers who repeat the clamour, merely echo the assertions of Suetonius and Dio. They could not be much better judges of the matter than we at this day, had they even taken the trouble to weigh the evidence. Aurelius Victor and Eutropius lived at a period three hundred years distant from the time of the conflagration, in the reigns of Julian and Valentinian; Cassiodorus was consul under Theodoric, and born in 476; and Jornandes, in Justinian's age, was secretary to a king of the Goths. As to the principal modern writers who assert and insist on the fact, and particularly the ecclesiastical historians, Xiphilinus, Vitranus and Sulpicius, though they lived earlier than Fleury, who in the present century supports their opinion, their assertions can have no more weight than his, nor their knowledge of the facts be greater than ours. Xiphilinus was the professed abridger of Dio Cassius. Dio repeated from Suetonius, and upon the foundation of Suetonius' authority the whole fabric must ultimately depend. If any thing has been added, it has probably been the work of exuberant imagination, like that of Karholts of Hamburg, a modern ecclesiastical writer, who represents the Emperor at a banquet sending forth troops of incendiaries, and sitting to hear at intervals the triumphant tale of their horrid exploits, a picture of which he could not have found the least trait in any ancient historian. It remains only to observe, that Suetonius, the father of this tale, could not have been unwittingly deceived into this assertion.

Thus have I endeavoured to scrutinize, in this instance, the accuracy and authenticity of Suetonius, which may

be a clue to his general character as a writer, the only object perhaps which could have justified my calling the attention to a question so remote, and seemingly so uninteresting.

Always, as I have said, has that historian appeared to me to be overrated; the indecency of his descriptions has been often condemned, and it was well observed, that Suetonius wrote the lives of the Emperors with the same licentiousness with which they lived. Were I to compare Suetonius with any writer of our own time, in point of credit due to his narration, I would scarcely assign him a place superior to Smollet's; I mean not with respect to composition, but as to authenticity and materials. Both of them seem to have compiled from the *actus diurni*, or newspapers of the day, and to merit equal authority with those crude and hasty chronicles. If the one has lived for eighteen centuries, while the other possibly may not for one, it has perhaps been owing to the charms of his composition, not to the dignity of his history.

If these remarks shall in any degree tend to ascertain the rank of this famed historian in the scale of history, or rather by calling the attention of more accurate observers to the general complexion of his works, to induce them to ascertain it, they have an importance which at this remote time they could not borrow from the subject itself. They may perhaps also derive some additional claim to attention, from the circumstance of a celebrated attack having been lately made by Mr. Whittaker of Manchester, on the authenticity of his rival historian, in a comparison between Tacitus and Gibbon.

Trans. R. I. Acad.

REVIEW OF NEW PUBLICATIONS.

A Letter to Lord Viscount Southwell, containing Remarks on vesting in his Majesty the nomination of Catholic Bishops....By J. B. Trotter, Esq. late private Secretary to the Right Honourable Charles James Fox....Dublin, Printed by H. Fitzpatrick, Capel-street. 1808. p.p. 36. price, 1s. 8d.

SINCERELY attached to Catholic Emancipation, on the broad prin-

ciple, that the State ought to have no cognizance over opinions on the subject of religion, we rejoiced at the more liberal practice which had for some time prevailed, to do away the penal code, and remove disabilities on account of difference of opinions. We therefore cannot but regret that a mistaken policy has latterly interrupted the progress of this good work, and that temporary party politics

should be permitted to frustrate the dictates of justice and sound policy.

In the discussion which took place in the last session of Parliament, hints were thrown out, that in case of the remaining restrictions on Catholics being removed, the Catholics would concede to the King, or in other words, to the Minister of the day, the right of rejection on the nomination of their Bishops. This measure appears to have been proposed from a desire to facilitate the adoption of the plan of emancipation, by blunting the edge of prejudice. This was to be effected by strengthening the hands of government, to allay the fears of the timid, and to gratify the wish of some, by throwing additional power to a quarter, which although already possessing great power, is still desirous to grasp at more. The Commons of England, about twenty-seven years ago, resolved, "that the power of the Crown had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished;" and certainly the current of events, since that period has not tended to diminish this power.

Much discussion has since taken place, on this subject of the Veto, as it is technically called, among the Catholic body. The laudable interest among them appear generally in favour of making this concession. The Bishops at a general meeting have resolved, that it is inexpedient to allow this power to the King, though in an explanation which was afterwards given by one of their body, it is admitted that the granting of this power is not inconsistent with the essential doctrines of the Catholic church. The letter to Lord Southwell, now under review is written to support the negative side of conceding this power; and the writer discovers a warm and liberal heart. In venturing to differ from him, on some parts of this letter, we enter on the subject with great reluctance: but candour and a sense of duty are paramount obligations, when we do speak, to speak with sincerity and plainness.

The subject appears to be unnecessarily complicated with the Union. The introduction of political considerations on one side frequently draws on a recurrence to a similar mode

of reasoning on the other, in a matter in which they ought to have no place on either side: neither does it appear necessary to the proper elucidation of the subject, to recur to motives founded on the stamp of antiquity, or drawn from national vanity. The doctrine of unlimited liberty of religious opinions, stands on a surer basis, than on an adherence to sentiments merely because they had been adopted by our ancestors, or come recommended to us by the pomp of moulder towers, and venerable ruins. The latter mode of treating the subject has the appearance of an attempt to remove prejudice, by means of other prejudices. If such sentiments were to prevail, where would be the progressive improvement of mankind? One generation would then follow another in the same beaten track. We, slaves to the opinions of our ancestors, and in succession to become ancestors to our posterity. Antiquity adds no weight to opinions. Arguments calmly produced are the only weapons which truth allows her votaries to use. Man should think, and allow others to think unmolested and undisturbed, without attempts on any side to point the finger of ridicule, or to add the weight of legal disqualifications against the adherents either to old or new opinions.

In advocating the just claims of the oppressed, it is not necessary to identify ourselves with them in an approbation of their opinions. Through an amiable error, a generous heart may be sometimes induced to mix strong feelings in this manner, and to combine two things essentially different. In thus expressing ourselves let it not be thought that we wish in the smallest degree, to fritter away the rights of the Catholics to entire emancipation. Far from us be the thought! The aim is to hold an even balance. They have a right to exercise private judgment, unfettered by pains and penalties. We have the same, and cannot relinquish through a complaisance to the opinions of others, the free expression of our own. The energetic language of Mirabeau is consecrated by its soundness and striking propriety. "The communion of every man with the most High is independent of all political institution. There is a pro-

perty which no man wishes to make common: the movements of his soul, and the transports of his mind. The examination of principles, considered as opinions, concern us no more. Between God and the heart of man, what government dares to interfere?"

This pamphlet abounds with many good arguments, to show the impolicy of vesting in the crown the right of exercising a power of rejection over the nomination of the Bishops. In these remarks the Reviewer fully coincides. But he also takes the liberty to inquire why is dependence on any external power necessary? May not the nomination of Catholic Bishops be equally independent of the Pope as of the King? Dr. O'Reilly admits that this right of election consists with the general principle of their Church, and Charles Butler, a late Catholic writer, has shown that this mode is practised by them in other countries. Many important advantages would appear to result from the adoption of this independent mode, for which some enlightened Catholics are zealous advocates. Some years ago the Bishops were nominated by the Pope, mostly by the influence of the Catholic aristocracy of Ireland. Latterly the clergy of the diocese return the name of the object of their choice to the Pope, for his approbation. A germ of improvement may be perceived in this manner of election, and we trust there is room to hail the increasing liberality of future days.

The friends to free discussion, well knowing the inestimable value of it, cannot but be anxious that it should universally prevail; and that Catholics and Protestants, however they may differ in some respects, forgetting former times, in which both have erred, may cordially unite in the wish that the disposition and power to persecute for diversity of opinion may cease. As the possession of power has a strong tendency to corrupt the human heart, let us hope for the extension and prevalence of that liberal policy, when neither party shall have the dominancy over the other; but both be contented without seeking for mastery, to live as brethren. In former days both parties set up a *standard mind*, and mutually persecuted each other. The absurdity of forcing opinions is gra-

dually becoming more apparent, and notwithstanding some unfavourable paroxysms now and then occurring, we have confidence in the progress of liberality, and in an enlightened and enlarged policy superseding the dogmatism of intolerance and bigotry. K.

An Introduction to the Irish Language, in three parts, 1, an Original and Comprehensive Grammar. 2, Familiar Phrases and Dialogues. 3, Extracts from Irish Books and Manuscripts, in the Original character, with copious Tables of the Contractions. By the Rev. W. Neilson, D.D. p.p. 282. Dublin, Wogan, 1808. price 6s. 6d.

INTERESTED as we feel for every publication which respects the honour and improvement of our country, we have not contemplated without pleasure, the recent attempts which have been making to introduce a taste for the study of the Irish language. A language which is spoken by at least one third of the inhabitants of the British isles, and by more than three fourths of the natives of Ireland, has some claim to attention; especially in an age which boasts of its familiarity with the dialects of the East, of having penetrated the wilds of Africa in quest of knowledge, and enriched its etymological repositories by vocabularies from the islands of the Pacific, and the banks of the Ohio.

Many circumstances, however, have contributed to discourage the study of our vernacular tongue. The distracted state of the country was for many ages unfavourable to its cultivation, and the narrow and mistaken policy of England, during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. passed strict injunctions to prevent it from being longer spoken in our schools. Due care also has been taken to depreciate its beauty and excellence, by representing it as harsh and unmusical, abounding in guttural sounds, and aspirates, and presenting a constant discordance between its orthography and pronunciation. When Anne with a liberality worthy of a Queen, proposed to establish Professorships of the Irish language, in her universities, she was dissuaded by the Duke of